

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 SAM-01

IO-10 /080 W

----- 029143

R 111701Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2536

UNCLAS ROME 11555

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, IT

SUBJ: ITALIAN PRESS COVERAGE PRESIDENT FORD'S FIRST
ANNIVERSARY

1. SUMMARY: ITALIAN PRESS NOTED FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF PRESIDENT FORD'S PRESIDENCY WITH SUMMARIES OF INTERVIEWS, ANALYSES OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AFTER WATERGATE AND GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC FORECASTS OF PRESIDENT'S ELECTORAL PROSPECTS. MANY FAVORABLE COMMENTS ON FORD'S CANDOR, OPENNESS, AND HONEST PERSONALITY, TOGETHER WITH WIDESPREAD VIEW THAT HE WAS RIGHT MAN TO HEAL WOUNDS OF WATERGATE. PAESE SERA CRITICIZED PRESIDENT'S "CONSERVATISM," AND L'UNITA' EXPRESSED WONDER THAT PRESIDENT APPEARED TO BE SURPRISED THAT THE WATERGATE SCANDAL WAS NOT SUPPRESSED FROM THE BEGINNING. END SUMMARY.

2. EXCERPTS: CORRIERE DELLA SERA SUMMARIZED RADIO INTERVIEW ON FRIDAY AND CARRIED MONDAY FRONTPAGE BY UGO STILLE FROM NEW YORK ON GENERALLY FAVORABLE US PRESS TREATMENT OF PRESIDENT'S FIRST YEAR. "FORD'S STRENGTH IS HIS PERSONALITY WHICH FOR VARIOUS REASONS IS CONGENIAL TO THE PRESENT AMERICAN MOOD. HIS POLITICAL OPPONENTS ALSO AGREE THAT HIS INTEGRITY OPENNESS, AND SINCERITY HAVE HELPED TO ELIMNATE THE WATERGATE TRAUMA. THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONALITY IS REFLECTED IN THE NEW ATMOSPHERE OF THE WHITE HOUSE.

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HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT MUST STILL DEMONSTRATE HIS ABILITY TO

GIVE AMERICAN A SENSE OF DIRECTION. HIS MAJOR WEAKENESS SO FAR HAS BEEN THE LACK OF A LONG RANGE VISION IN U.S. POLITICS. THE SECOND YEAR OF HIS PRESIDENCY WILL THEREFORE BE HIS ACID TEST."

3. IL POPOLO'S MARCELLO SPACCARELLI REPORTED FROM WASHINGTON AUGUST 7 THAT GERALD FORD CAN TAKE PRIDE IN HIS TREATMENT OF THE STORMY NATIONAL DIVISIONS INHERITED FROM NIXON. FORD'S MAIN ACCOMPLISHMENT IS TO HAVE RESTORED THE PRESIDENCY, ELIMINATING NIXON'S AND EVEN JOHNSON'S IMPERIAL PRETENSIONS, SECRECY AND INTOLERANCE. HIS SECOND ACCOMPLISHMENT IS TO HAVE ASSEMBLED ONE OF THE BEST CABINETS OF THE POSTWAR PERIOD. THE THIRD IS TO HAVE COURAGEOUSLY VETOED THE DEMOCRATS' MAD PUBLIC EXPENDITURE PROGRAMS. THE GREATEST LIABILITY OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION IS NOW THE FACT THAT KISSINGER STILL FUNCTIONS BOTH AS SECRETARY OF STATE AND ADVISER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY. THESE TWO FUNCTIONS SHOULD REMAIN SEPARATED.

4. WASHINGTON-BASED GIROLAMO MODESTI WROTE IN CONSERVATIVE LA NAZIONE AND IL RESTO DEL CARLINO ON AUGUST 9 THAT AFTER A YEAR GERRY FORD'S MIRACLE CONTINUES. MISTER RIGHT IS IN THE SADDLE, STEADIER THAN EVER, ALTHOUGH HE IS THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT THERE ARE FIFTEEN DANGEROUS, DELICATE LONG MONTHS BEFORE THE NEXT ELECTIONS, AND THAT ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN." MODESTI ADDED ON AUGUST 10 THAT "THERE ARE SIGNS THAT FORD HAS TAKEN THE WAVE OF CRITICISM AGAINST HIMSELF AND PARTICULARLY AGAINST KISSINGER ON FOREIGN POLICY VERY SERIOUSLY. THERE ARE INCREASING SIGNS THAT HE IS BEGINNING TO PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE SECRETARY."

5. IL TEMPO'S MARINO DE MEDICI REPORTED FROM WASHINGTON AUGUST 9 THAT "FORD HAS RESTORED CALM AND NORMALCY TO THE NATION, AND DIGNITY AND LEGITIMACY TO THE PRESIDENCY."

6. AUGUST 10 IL GIORNALE SUMMARIZED FORD INTERVIEWS AND ADDED, "IT WILL NOT BE EASY TO OUST FORD FROM THE WHITE HOUSE. HIS BASIC STRENGTH IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE INTEGRITY OF HIS CHARACTER. HIS SELF-ASSURANCE COMES FROM THE OPINION HE UNCLASSIFIED

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HAS OF THE AMERICANS AND THEIR ASPIRATIONS IN THIS STORMY INTERNATIONAL ERA. 'THE AMERICANS ARE OPEN, AND ARE BASICALLY VERY HONEST AND CORDIAL,' HE SAID. THEY FEEL A CERTAIN KINDSHIP WITH A PERSON OF THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS. THIS PERSON IS IN FACT GERALD FORD."

7. AUGUST 8 LA STAMPA'S VITTORIO ZUCCONI REPORTED FROM WASHINGTON: NIXON WAS A MALIGNANT TUMOR IN THE AMERICAN SYSTEM,

AND THE COUNTRY'S EVENINGS WILL NO LONGER BE FILLED BY A POLITICIAN LIKE NIXON. CERTAINLY NOT BY THE CLEAN-CUT, DISARMING, BORING FORD. TO ATTACK FORD IS A SIN, NOT A PLEASURE. WITH HIM, THE WHITE HOUSE IS AGAIN A COLO-NIAL VILLA, NO LONGER THE EAGLE'S NEST FULL OF MICROPHONES AND SECRETS. FOR A JOURNALIST, A WATERGATE OCCURS ONCE IN A LIFETIME, AND THAT IS THE PRESIDENT'S GOOD FORTUNE."

8. AUGUST 8 IL GIORNO ARTICLE BY GIULIANO VASSALLI NOTES THAT "ONE YEAR LATER, A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN AMERICA AND IN THE WORLD CONFIRMS THAT FORD'S PARDON OF NIXON WAS A NICE DECISION. WITH FORD AND KISSINGER, THE U.S. EXECUTIVE HAS CONTINUED THE REPUBLICAN PARTY POLICY. IN ITS MISTAKES AND ITS SUCCESSES, AMERICA AND IS NOW FREE OF THOSE DEAD WEIGHTS THAT WOULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED ITS DIGNITY AND POWER. FORD'S PARDON REMOVED A TUMOR FROM AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE."

9. COMMUNIST PRESS. PAESE SERA'S JOHN CAPPELLI AUGUST 10 PIECE FROM NEW YORK CRITICIZED FORD'S "CONSERVATISM," ADDING THAT FORD IS "CONVINCED THAT THE DEMOCRATS WILL NOT GIVE HIM TOO MUCH TROUBLE AFTER THE WATERGATE EARTHQUAKE BUT WILL ALLOW HIM TO CONTINUE TO KEEP THINGS AS THEY ARE, AS THOUGH THERE WAS NEITHER A PRE-WATERGATE NOR A POST-WATERGATE ERA." L'UNITA' AUGUST 10 SUMMARIZES THE PRESIDENT'S INTERVIEWS, STRESSING HIS "CANDID SURPRISE" THAT THE WATERGATE SCANDAL WAS NOT STIFLED AT THE BEGINNING. THE PAPER TOOK NOTE OF PRESIDENT'S DEFENSE OF "HIS DECISION TO SIGN THE HELSINKI STATEMENT" AND OBSERVED THAT THIS COMMENTS REFLECT HIS CONTINUING DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING A NATIONAL CONSENSUS PRIOR TO THE 1976 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS."

COMMENT: WIDESPREAD AND OVERWHELMINGLY FAVORABLE COMMENT
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ON PRESIDENT'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY MAY INDICATE MEDIA CONSENSUS THAT AMERICA AGAIN ON EVEN KEEL AFTER TRAUMAS OF VIET NAM, WATERGATE, AND DOUBLE-DIGIT INFLATION.VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ROME11555
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750277-0041
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750864/aaaaceco.tel
Line Count: 157
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hartledg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 FEB 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 FEB 2003 by ReddocGW>; APPROVED <10 FEB 2004 by hartledg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ITALIAN PRESS COVERAGE PRESIDENT FORD'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY
TAGS: SOPN, IT, (FORD, GERALD R)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006